

1799

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MR. EMERSON'S
ARTILLERY ELECTION
SERMON.

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X

Piety and Arms.

A
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
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THE

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OF THEIR

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.


By WILLIAM EMERSON.



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1799.

SEERMON

THE ALLEGORY OF THE LONGEVITY

BY THE REV. J. W. ALLEN

LECTION OF OFFICERS



Printed by W. B. B. B. B.

A N

Artillery Election Sermon.

PSALM cxlix. 6.

LET THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD BE IN THEIR MOUTH,
AND A TWO-EDGED SWORD IN THEIR HAND.

THREE interpretations may be given to these words.

1. It was the custom of ancient, as it is of modern, nations, to excite the courage of their armies, when going to battle, by instrumental musick. The Etrurians, for this purpose, used the trumpet; the Lacedemonians, the pipe; and the Egyptians, the drum. The Hebrew people, ever instructed to borrow nothing of idolatrous manners, are here taught to acquire the necessary valour to combat and vanquish their foes, by simply employing their voices in singing the wondrous power and acts of their divine deliverer. This is one interpretation of the words.* In its justification is adduced the following passage of the sacred Chronicles. *And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambu-*

B. II.
Ch. xx.
21, 22.

B bushments

* Consult the argument to this psalm in bishop Patrick's Paraphrase.

busshments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten.

2. A second construction of the text supposes the psalm, from which it is taken, to have been composed in honour of some recent successes, that had crowned the Jewish arms, for which the people of God are exhorted to celebrate his goodness, and, at the same time, to retain their martial habits, as a constant terrour to their enemies.

3. Lastly, It is notorious that the Jews, after returning from captivity at Babylon, were infested by a dangerous opposition to their liberties at home and abroad, which, through remarkable assistance of the divine providence, they finally crushed. Possibly the writer of this sublime and animated hymn designed to inspirit the patriots of his age to pursue and complete a triumph over their impious adversaries : and this construction is rendered almost probable by the context.

Let the saints be joyful in glory : let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand ; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people ; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron ; to execute upon them the judgment written : this honour have all his saints.*

Since it is now impossible, however, to know the author and date of this production, it is equally difficult and needless to ascertain the exclusive meaning of that portion of it, which is prefixed to this

* The Hebrew critick would probably render it, The saints *shall* be joyful, &c. they *shall* sing aloud, &c. But I follow the common translation.

this discourse. Combining, therefore, in some sort, its various senses abovementioned, we will consider the text as giving us the two-fold lesson of *piety* and the use of *arms*. Let us examine the operation of both in the light of means, by which a nation may retain its liberties, and defend its rights against unjust enemies.

I. We will observe the tendency of national piety. It conduces to the observance of religious institutions, to personal virtue, to the discharge of relative duties, and to the publick order, union, and prosperity.

1. A principle of piety in a people induces its observance of religious institutions. The heart, that is warmed with the admiration and love of the divine perfections, honours the means of moral improvement. If revelation had taught to her disciples no forms of worship, which nature had not suggested to her children, the servant of God would still have sought in society an enlargement of religious affections, which the secrecy and silence of his closet could hardly create. His benevolence, too, the offspring of piety, would have led him to provide for the instruction and consolation of creatures ignorant, weak, and dependent like himself. But now that the authority of religious ordinances is known to be divine; now that the law hath been dispensed by Moses, and grace and truth have beamed upon mankind in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the man of piety is the observer of publick worship, not merely on account of its reasonableness and utility, but from a principle of regard to God.

Imagine

Imagine now, my hearers, a whole community attending on the institutions of religion from a principle of piety. What august and influential notions do they hence receive of the object of their praises ! What a sense of mutual obligations and dependence ; and what motives to relieve, to strengthen, to defend, to bless society ! Indeed, whence but from religious institutions can that portion of knowledge be derived to the commonalty of a state, which is absolutely essential to the maintenance of its liberties ? Accordingly the historian of elder times and the observer of the present age uniformly report, that where the institutes of christianity have been most intelligibly and conscientiously revered, there liberty has dwelt with the greatest security and pleasure. Yes, ye despots of the earth, and ye, who cruelly invade the rights of mankind, it is undoubtedly your interest to overturn the altar, and unhallow the sabbath, because the ashes of these rites produce an ignorance, which will foster your crimes.

2. A principle of piety promotes personal virtue. As there can be no genuine religion without morality, so there is no safe morality without religion. If morals are the lamp, the fear of God is the oil, which must give it a strong and uniform lustre. Regard to temporary health, tranquillity, and honour, forms, of itself, a character of imperfect goodness. On the other hand, respect to the will, and reference to the perpetual notice of the Deity, just views of his benevolence and purity, and a sense of accountableness to him at the final judgment of the world, deeply imprinted in the soul, tend directly

rectly to the sanctification and exaltation of man. Because he sees suspended over his head the sword of retributive justice, he avoids anger, pride, and inordinate pleasures; and he practises meekness and moderation, temperance and industry, because, by the appointment of God, they are connected with eternal joys. Thus, a sentiment of religion, whilst it commands the will, enlisteth also the affections in the cause of virtue.

It is impossible here not to see the connexion between piety, and the political strength and freedom. If the citizens of a state were universally pious, their labours and diligence would procure them wealth, whilst their wealth would not be followed by luxury, and the consequent reign of the malevolent passions. *Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?* In a country, where private virtue is remitted proportionally to the increase of the common opulence and grandeur, internal competitions and strife will certainly arise: these the ambitious of neighbouring states will employ and point against its liberties, whilst the distracted citizens, enervated by indolence and vice, have only to choose between an inglorious death, and a life of servitude and repentance. It is piety, then, which, by promoting the virtue of individuals, operates the salvation and happiness of the community.

3. It is piety, that excites a performance of relative duties. A moment's reflection informs every man, even in younger life, that he was not made solely for himself. He sees his social obligations

tions multiply with his years. His friend, his brother, his countryman, the stranger, all prefer him their claims. Is a principle of self-gratification, of vanity, family-pride, or thirst of distinction, always competent to their discharge? The history of infidels and atheists proves the truth of the negative. Ungoverned by a principle of piety, the affluent and powerful will be insolent and oppressive; the weak and dependent will be ungrateful and mutinous. Where motives of worldly interest and fame are suffered to hold the supreme rule, elevation of rank will be used merely to terrify and control. The servant will tremble in perpetual apprehension of his lord's displeasure, and the lord will be equally suspicious of the servant's treachery. There will be a constant war among all classes of society. Caprice and passion will break asunder the ties of consanguinity and friendship; and no bands will be found sufficiently strong, by which the most solemn and lovely connexions in human life can be saved from dissolution.

Religion, on the contrary, strengthens every tie, and fortifies every obligation.* It inspires condescension and gentleness in the great, and clothes the powerful with the sweet and resistless charms of kindness. It helps the lowly cottager to sustain the inferiority of his station; the innocent prisoner, the weight of his chains; and the wretched of every name, the burden of his woes; by presenting to their full view the providence and agency of God; and by putting, in the place of

* This is a favourite idea of the celebrated Neckar. It is, in short, the vital principle of his book "On the Importance of Religious Opinions."

of their feelings, a lively faith, that the virtues of submission and contentment are destined to en-
throned them in the kingdom of heaven. Mutual
confidence is thus cherished amid all ranks in the
state. Every citizen faithfully discharges his re-
spective trust ; and from the constant tribute,
which flows to the commonwealth from individual
honesty and domestick continence, her *peace becomes
as a river, and her righteousness as the waves of the sea.*

4. Still more particularly and directly does a
pious principle contribute to the publick order,
union, and prosperity. It is this, which binds the
subject to the governour. Without government,
there can be no order in civil society ; without
oaths, there can be no government ; without
piety, oaths have neither use nor meaning. It is,
therefore, in religion, that the ruled finds the guar-
antee of his rights. Convince him that there is no
God, or, which is much the same, that he does not
govern and judge the world in righteousness, and
you subvert his faith in the ruler. He will no
longer willingly submit to the restraints of power ;
he is at once prepared for insurrection and pillage.

It is the same principle, likewise, that obliges the
magistrate to the subject. It places him beneath the
immediate and perpetual cognizance of the king of
kings. It arrests him in every project of personal
aggrandizement to the detriment of the citizen.
It confines his studies and toil to the general good.

Hence the peaceful reign of law and order in
the state, the cement of national union, and the
multiplication of resources against the common
danger. In no way can a state realize these bless-
ings,

ings, and enjoy its liberties, except by disinterestedness in the governour, obedience in the private citizen, observance of publick faith, and a prompt execution of justice ; except, in short, by national piety.

Accordingly the frequent recurrence to antiquity on this subject is always justified, by the multitude of proofs it furnishes, of the rise and glory of empires by righteousness, and of their declension and downfal by wickedness. It should be accounted neither puerile nor pedantick in the moralist, when he tells us, that the ravages of impiety and luxury were more injurious to the Romans, than those of Pyrrhus or Hannibal ; and that vice was the ruin of the Grecian states. Especially does the page of Jewish history present to our view, in a luminous and impressive manner the influence and effects of piety on the Hebrew nation. It was this, that made her populous, free, and rich, and that poured into her lap the charming joys of peace and plenty. It was this, which made her *beautiful* as her own *Tirzah*, *comely* as her still fairer capital, and, at the same time, *terrible* to her enemies *as an army with banners*. It was piety, in fine, that so exactly measured her prosperity, and so notoriously determined her fate, that the fact was the constant burden of her sacred songs. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem. Praise thy God, O Zion: for he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates, he hath blessed thy children within thee.*

Can. vi. 4

Psalms
cxlviii. 11,
12, 13.

Wherefore it is a just and safe conclusion, that the piety of a people is one important and happy means

means of its defence ; that it directly serves its internal wealth, population, order, and union ; and that, as eminent virtue spreads a glory round individuals to the shame and dread of their enemies, so the righteousness of a community erects, as it were, a wall of fire between it and its foes.

Such, nevertheless, my hearers, is the disjointed state of morals in our world, such the restless ambition of man, corrupted by the love and possession of power, that not even innocence and piety are secure from his depredating and oppressive hand. The devotion and beneficence of Elijah did not shield him from the persecution of Ahab ; nor did the sanctity of the reverend Baptist divert the cruelty of the Galilean tetrarch. States, too, are exposed to the spoliations of states ; and the community, whose only defence is virtue, is sometimes the prey of violence from an unprincipled power.

In its patriotick addresses, therefore, the christian pulpit, contrary to its pacifick character, is compelled to be the advocate of arms, as well as of piety. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.*

II. That there are cases, in which both private and publick war is considered just on the principles of natural and revealed religion, is the general concession of ethical writers.* How would the rights of the individual be deemed safe, if the thief might rob, and the assassin murder, him with impunity ? If no violence were suffered to inflict punishment on the one, and extort restitution from the other, what value would be attached to property, or what comfort

* See especially Hutcheson and Paley.

comfort to life? Unprotected from the rapacity of the covetous, and the rude blasts of calumny, and unrecompensed by the court of justice, the boasted blessings of civilized man would be all an illusion. Contrasted with his condition, that of the hermit, or of the savage, would be every way eligible.

As long, therefore, as the dissocial passions shall poison and convulse society, the civil ruler must be ordained to arrest and reclaim disturbers of the peace. Even the disciple of the friendly Penn, if he would see the government effectual to its ends, must provide for its exigencies, and put a sword into the hand of the magistrate. For what is command without power, or law without penalty?

War between states is justified for the same reasons, which make it righteous between individuals. If the publick enemy of a country will not be governed by the rules of eternal order, nor by laws established by the common consent of nations; if he is neither awed into a pacifick temper by the lustrous example of piety and meekness in the community he seeks to oppress, nor disarmed of malice by its conciliatory proposals, the intended victim of plunder and slavery may religiously arm in defence of its rights. Indeed an application of the principles of force is here publick spirited and humane. Tyrants of the world should be taught to respect the liberties of their fellowmen; and their destruction in one age should inscribe a salutary lesson on the page of history for succeeding oppressors.

However,

However, then, the pity and sighs of the sensible heart may be excited, from contemplating the horrible effects of war, we are obliged, under certain circumstances, to view an armed association one of the most necessary engines of state. Corroborative of this sentiment is the language of the scriptures, which thus animates the pious to resist their insulting and tyrannick foes.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and the cities of our God. Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed : for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.

2 Sam.
x. 12.

2 Chron.
xxxii. 7, 8.

Psalms
cxliv. 1.

Whilst we pay homage to the ancient revelations of the Deity, let us not be understood to militate with his more valuable dispensation by the great Reformer of mankind. We vindicate no war, which is not the legitimate offspring of self-defence ; none, incompatible with any sober construction of the precept, *Resist not evil* ; none, which embraces other objects, than such a restitution to the injured state, as shall inhibit future aggressions ; none, in which a christian country cannot consistently appeal to the sovereign arbiter of nations for the rectitude of its cause, and confide the issue to his just decision.

Hence, although national piety alone must be deemed an insufficient defence of national right, in the present condition of humanity, it is yet infinitely preferable to a military system altogether supported by selfishness and violence. Ruthless ravagers

ravagers of our race are they, who levy war for the sake of widening their territory, and filling their coffers. Execrable plagues of mankind are they, who find an occasion for their arms in the internal dissensions, or defenceless frontier of a neutral power, or who, for the sake of connecting their names* with memorable events, lay waste the dwellings of the just.

The war of such heroes is like the fury of sanguinary cannibals, and the rage of the hungry tiger. Nay, it is impolitick. Their two edged swords must finally prove fatal to themselves, as well as the people they spoil. After being, for a while, disturbed by their outrages, the world will rise and complete the repression of their arrogance. So strongly impressed on the human heart is a sense of equity, and so happily is this sentiment improved by the diffusion of religious knowledge, that the time approaches, when the abolition of tyranny shall be considered the common cause of God and of man.

Wherefore, if a system of national defence, wholly pacifick, be ineffectual to the general safety, through want of force and arms, a nation of soldiers is doomed to a transient existence, from a deficiency of religious principle. The unarmed faint is indeed a defenceless dove, the almost certain prey of the ravenous hawk; but the impious warrior is a destructive serpent, whose head, inheriting the universal odium, will eventually be bruised.

So then piety is a defence, and arms are a defence; but since neither, singly, will enable a nation

* Read a rhapsody of Buonaparte in one of his letters to a friend.

tion to maintain its liberties and existence, in this mixed state, its wisdom consisteth in teaching its citizens to *let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.*

APPLICATION.

1. If the preceding remarks have a foundation in truth, let them instruct us, my fellow citizens, in these eventful times. Probably at no period of her existence, could our country have exhorted her sons with greater propriety, than she now can exhort them, to the exercise of arms. For a number of years past, we have seen a powerful nation in Europe, evidently actuated by principles of impiety and unrighteousness, making war upon a great part of the civilized world. With a force of conquest, scarcely paralleled in any former age, the French Republick has diffused death and menaces throughout all Europe. Its arms have made Germany a field of battle: they have overtured the republicks of Venice and Geneva, and wasted their beautiful provinces: they have vanquished and plundered Italy: they have put the yoke upon Spain: they have rent in pieces the kingdom of Naples: they have drained Holland of its wealth, have spoiled Switzerland of its liberties and its glory, and have, in fact, left to no country, they have assailed, ought but its moans. What is more interesting, and justly alarming, to us, through each act of this sanguinary drama in Europe, the emissaries of France have been erecting their standard in this land of neutrality, and on these, alas,
too

too hospitable shores, digging the grave of American liberty !

Columbian warriors ! where are your swords ? If with these facts and examples before your eyes, you permit them to rust in their scabbards, where is the expatriated Swiss, or impoverished Hollander, what shade of your fathers, who fell on Bunker's heights, or bled on the plains of Yorktown, who will not pronounce you unworthy the joys of freedom !

But I forget that the United States has marshalled her armies, and is prepared for her insidious foe. God be praised, my countrymen, that we learn wisdom from history and observation ; that the Eye and Light and Strong Rod of our nation hath developed the hostile machinations of France, pointed to the means of their defeat, and already scourged the Directory in its own cabinet ; that our armament on the seas is protecting our commerce and adding to the naval disgrace of the common enemy ; that our troops are gathering from every corner of the Union to the accustomed banners of the hoary Chief, whose single name commands the faith and courage of every American soldier ; and that our political prospects are opening with brighter hopes, as a reward for the pious and manly efforts of our country to *stand fast in the liberty, wherewith she has been made free.*

Let us not, however, be deceived by specious appearances. The fate of the unhappy Swiss Cantons continually awakens our sad remembrance. Seven long years was France in dissolving the Helvetick

vetick Union,* and burying its ancient liberties. If, in the same space of time, she has not been equally successful in accomplishing her designs against the United States, let the truth inspire, not relax, our perseverance in those measures, which, under the guidance of heaven, have thus far baffled her views. Whilst we continue our appeal to the divine providence, let us proceed to burnish our arms and fortify our shores. The most correct information our country can furnish† assures us, that our dearest interests are still in jeopardy through the insidiousness and hostility of the French nation. It yet views our lands with cupidity, and our independence with rage. In such a political juncture, every measure, which promises the smallest support to the government or defence of the state, and especially every armed establishment, is unspeakably estimable.

In this point of view, therefore, gentlemen of the ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY, we exult in the continued existence of your institution. We have loved and applauded your patriotism in the days of peace; but, in this hour of national danger, we honour and revere you. Permit us to hope, that a military college, which, for nearly two centuries, has contributed to the glory of Massachusetts, and whose sons, in times we well remember, have fought the battles of their country, will, by no means, in the present crisis, forget the purposes of its creation.

At the same time, Sirs, conformably to the spirit of our ministry, we wish you to consider those
arms,

* See the instructive Du Pan.

† Late proclamation for U. S. Fast.

arms, as the sad emblems of an unnatural and depraved state of society. Under this impression, you will bear them not with pride, but reluctance, and will consider the necessity of their assumption as a source of humiliation, and not of glory, to you in common with our kind. Hence, let your ambition direct itself to the attainment and exercise of that piety, which we preach, and which, when universally practised, will render your ordinance needless, and restore the order of our earth. You will thus be our permanent honour, as well as present defence. Your contemporaries will equally seek your virtues as their model, and your standard as their protection. And, having lived with *the praises of God in your mouths, and the sword in your hands*, a just and grateful posterity shall inscribe upon your tombs, These are the men who died for their country.

2. Our military brethren form not the only class, to which the subject applies itself. On the duties of piety, it addresses a meek, but solemn, lesson to all our fellow-citizens. The rulers of France have not only fought the wreck of civil society, but of the moral world. After profaning the temples in Europe, they have come hither also with their sacrilege. On this side the Atlantick they have brought their artillery of destruction to the soul, their books, principles, vices. This is the cruel war they levy upon our churches, our religion, our Saviour, and our God. These are the weapons, wherewith they attack our families, our closets, our very bosoms; seeking to despoil us of the dear hope of immortality, and to darken that heavenly

only splendour, which hath irradiated the prison of death.

Happy for our country, had this war upon our worthiest affections and hopes been as successful, as that upon our civil privileges! The fact is otherwise. Christians, you see its ravages in that dereliction of moral obligation, which characterizes a part of our citizens. Sabbatical institutions, whose observance was once the praise of our country, have, in many places, received a wound, which will bleed before the eyes of all the present generation. The houses of publick worship, venerable from their appropriation, and endeared to our feelings from the constant visits of our pious ancestors, begin to be neglected, and the holy precepts of pure christianity to be contemned. Particularly do you see the triumphs of Gallick infidelity in that factious and disorganizing spirit, which has stalked through the United States for the purpose of destroying our confidence in the officers of the Federal government, and of undermining the government itself. For still we are obliged to assert the connexion between religious rituals, and the life of liberty. Our enemy well knows, that the *amiable tabernacles of the Lord of hosts* are the only sanctuary of the people's rights; that christianity is the very temple of freedom; and that the despotism he adores cannot exist with *the high praises of God*. It is therefore he meets us on our sacred ground. It is thence he aims at us his deadly weapons, *weapons, not indeed carnal, but mighty through a vain philosophy, to the pulling down of the strong holds of virtue, casting down principles*

ples of piety, *and every thing that exalteth itself against disorder, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of the devil.*

Whoever, hence, in this war with atheists, will acknowledge the being, and celebrate the perfections, of God, is a real patriot ; and who, in this contest with infidels, will be *a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, shall have the honour of warring for his country. Here is a warfare, Americans, in which we all may engage advantageously ; so easily maintained, as to admit recruits without distinction of age or sex, and yet so necessary, as that, without its support, all other means of defence are nugatory.

In vain is it for you, legislators, to levy taxes, and establish armies, for the safety of the republick, if we, the subjects, by our luxuries and sloth, consume the political body.

Vain is it for you, faithful foldiers, to hazard your lives in the field, whilst we, the citizens, by our disunion at home, act in union with the enemy.

And ye ministers of religion, you may as well keep closed, as open, your churches, if we, your pretended hearers, expend that day in scenes of voluptuousness, which is consecrated to religious improvement. It is no longer needful for you to teach us the divine philosophy of Jesus Christ, your master, which was designed to make us the happy citizens of both earth and heaven, if we suffer the Voltaires and Volneys of our age to destroy our usefulness in this world, and to terminate our hopes at the sepulchre.

Descendants

Descendants of a brave and pious race, let us, therefore, universally resolve to be the defenders and saviours of our country, by the devout observance of religious institutions, by the practice of that personal virtue, which ennobles the human nature, and adorns the christian profession, by sacredly and faithfully discharging our relative duties, and by seeking with a steady and enlightened zeal the publick order and felicity.

Thus, although we may fail of conquering our earthly enemies, we yet shall be victorious over foes infinitely more dangerous, I mean our vices; and though unsuccessful in defending the country, which gave us birth, we shall, nevertheless, be certain of possessing *another and a better country, even an heavenly, where the high praises of God will be in every mouth, and the use of the sword will be no more known.*

A M E N.

Essentials of a brave and honest man, but as
 therefore, universally, relative to the delicate
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 of religious institutions, by the practice of
 that personal virtue, which involves the human re-
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